

Partners Outdoors: A Tradition of Action

The Partners Outdoors program was initiated in 1992 to draw together tomorrow's leaders from federal recreation-providing agencies and the recreation industry in order to accomplish two goals: (1) to reinforce an awareness of shared customers and interdependence of the public and private sectors and (2) to catalyze partnership-based actions to better serve recreation visitors to public lands. After 12 years, it is clear that the sessions have achieved both goals. The tangible results of Partners Outdoors are especially heartening. Major actions have occurred as direct outgrowths of Partners Outdoors meetings; dozens of other advances have developed as participants maintained contact long after the formal sessions adjourned.

Among the major outgrowths of past Partners Outdoors sessions are:

- **WOW - Wonderful Outdoor World:** a program to introduce city kids to the outdoors, which began in Los Angeles and, thanks to national partners like Disney, Coleman, the Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management and National Park Service, has now spread to cities across the nation;
- **The federal recreation-fee demonstration program** authorized by Congress beginning in FY96 and now to be replaced by a 10-year program through 2014;
- **Recreation Roundtable** research on visitor motivations, satisfaction levels and barriers to participation; beginning in 1996, this research became a joint public/private effort;
- **The National Recreation Lakes Study Commission**, and its report "Reservoirs of Opportunity," followed by the introduction of the National Recreation Lakes Act of 2001, which supports implementation of the recommendations made by the Commission, and the establishment of the Federal Lakes Recreation Leadership Council, which is coordinating a recreation demonstration program with 31 pilot study lakes;
- **Amendments to the Golden Eagle Pass**, making it available for private sale on a commissionable (1993) and consignment (1998) basis;
- **The Partners Outdoors Fair on Capitol Hill** designed to showcase creative partnership efforts aiding protection of America's outdoors and enhancements of visits to public sites;
- **The Smokey Bear hot-air balloon and display**, used since 1994 to celebrate that campaign's 50th anniversary and increase public understanding of fires in the forests;
- **Active federal agency participation** in many state tourism conferences;

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- The Washington, D.C., Urban Treehouse project, enlisting the National Park Service to host a modified version of the successful Atlanta experiment;
- A federal partnership manual designed to help field-level officials understand opportunities for cooperation with for-profit organizations;
- A cooperative recreation information system data base pilot project in Colorado;
- **Legends** awards: recognition of outstanding federal agency employees by the American Recreation Coalition during the Great Outdoors Week program in June;
- Shared-use facility strategy: an example is the federal information center in the REI flagship store in Seattle;
- Arrangements for a special Bureau of Land Management 50th anniversary display at Walt Disney World's EPCOT Center during 1996;
- An awareness campaign for Universal Access Design to encourage broad-based adoption of new practices by recreation's public and private providers;
- Introduction of the Ranger for a Day concept to increase public volunteerism and awareness of recreation facilities and services;
- Renewed interest in and enthusiasm for www.recreation.gov; and
- Production and distribution of the **Toolbox for the Great Outdoors** interactive CD, which provides information on numerous programs that can be used to supplement traditional appropriations for recreation programs.

In addition to these important accomplishments, Partners Outdoors has been responsible for many agreements and initiatives that result from informal discussions among Partners Outdoors participants.

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